

from our viewpoint...

## Shutdown unlikely, battle continues

Republicans and Democrats appear to have found enough wiggle room for both sides to agree to a two-week extension of the federal government beyond the shutdown deadline on Friday.

Senate Democrats have found some spending cuts to match what the House Republicans have said are the minimum to get the two-week extension.

The big question in this budget battle is not how much is going to be cut by the House and Senate, but which side believes they can put the blame on the other party for not cutting enough.

The Republicans shutdown the government in 1995, and caught the blame from voters in the next election. The real problem with a federal government shutdown is the fact the military and those on Social Security and other government programs would not get a pay check or it would be delayed until an agreement could be reached to restart the government.

It is unlikely a shutdown would last long as neither party could afford to make the millions of people upset and hamper the actions of the military men and women who are in the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan.

A two week delay would get the decision through the middle of March, and that would get many of the military checks and Social Security checks out in the mail.

Truthfully the big questions about the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and the supplies required to keep the military in the field have as much to do with the large federal debt as any domestic spending.

Something will have to be done in the next two weeks to find a bipartisan budget agreement to keep the government running until the end of September.

Dealing with the big questions of Medicare and Social Security are not part of the current budget discussions by either side. At some point both Democrats and Republicans will have to find a compromise on these two big issues.

The budget battle in Wisconsin continued through the weekend with neither side appearing to budge. The battle over collective bargaining has taken center stage. Both sides of the question have merit, but the Wisconsin public employees have said they would give the governor the concessions he had asked for. It was clear from the "punked" phone call the governor answered from a fake David Koch he is not interested in any concessions, but in breaking the unions.

What is an interesting side issue of the Wisconsin budget repair bill is it includes a section giving the governor authority to sell the 34 state owned power plants:

"...may sell any state-owned heating, cooling, and power plant or may contract with a private entity for the operation of any such plant, with or without solicitation of bids, for any amount that the department determines to be in the best interest of the state."

One writer sent a letter to the governor asking: "As a Wisconsin taxpayer, I want to know: who are these people/corporations, and what 'favors' do you owe them? How do you justify the selling of Wisconsin assets - without competitive bids - and claim that to be 'in the best interest' of the state?"

In past history we have seen the benefit of municipal and public ownership of utility plants and the distribution systems. This provision of the Wisconsin budget may prove to be a bigger time bomb for the state than the public employee unions. - Tom Betz



## Searching for my political identity

When I left my place of birth, Kansas, nearly nine months ago, I brought all of my baggage with me to Colorado, even one piece I've thought of tossing out because there seemed to be no further need for it. Well, I never got around to trashing it and I'm glad now that I still have it.

So, what's so special about that piece of luggage? It's full of paperwork that traces my years of political interest, telling the struggles I had with party loyalty, or lack thereof. For a very long time I was a registered Democrat. Yea, I know, a Democrat in Kansas? I always said Kansas raises two things very well: wheat and Republicans!

I was sort of active as a donkey jockey, thanks to my oldest brother, the late Norbert R. Dreiling, who was chairman of the Kansas Democratic Party for many years, actively involved in the successful presidential bid of John F. Kennedy, a delegate to many Democratic national conventions and he spearheaded the successful election of Robert Docking to the governorship for four consecutive two-year terms. That was a first for the Sunflower State.

I continued my loyalty to the Democratic machine until the early 1970s when South Dakota Senator George McGovern was tagged to be the party's presidential nominee. My young political mind told me he didn't have what it takes to sit in the oval office. Apparently my mind was right, he lost. And the shambles the party seemed to be in was of great concern. If memory serves me correctly Mr. McGovern delivered his acceptance speech when nobody was awake, I think it was like 2 a.m. Needless to say that was the first time in my life I voted Republican. I was one restless young man, and what's more I had to confront my wife Jeannie who was Democrat from head to toe. "You voted what?" she screamed. A few nights on the couch in the front room was enough; I apologized.

From that time on, my voting pattern showed the political uncertainty I was fighting. I traded off voting Democrat sometimes and Republican at other times. All the while I remained in the Democratic ranks. It was in the mid-90s I decided to put an end to this



tom dreiling

• time out with td

nagging "what to do" problem: I registered as an Independent; no guilt over whatever I did in the voting booth.

Now that I am settled here in Aurora, Colo., and my intentions are to call this home going forward, I again struggle. Will I register as a Democrat or as a Republican?

Before I go any further into that I need to explain my background. My mother and father were Democrats. Dad more active than mother, he held a couple of elected offices as Ellis County Clerk and as Hays City Commissioner, allowing him to serve terms as mayor. They had nine children and we were raised Democrats - period! Mother spent her time, besides being a noted seamstress throughout the area, teaching us Democratic cheers! "Give me a D, give me an E, give me as M, give me an O, give me a C, give me an R, give me an A, give me a T. What does it spell?" We would just look at one another. (Family should enjoy that little note.)

Ellis County, back then, was one of just a few counties in Kansas to enjoy a Democrat majority. We lived and breathed Democrat in our household. But as time went on we siblings began peeling off the family's political landscape. We moved to different states, for most part, to begin our new lives. Who would have ever thought Rich and Mollie Dreiling would have a child or two or maybe three who were on longer Democrats. Heaven forbid! That was worse then getting caught peeking under the carnival tent when we were kids to watch the girlies do their thing. Yikes! But today our parents are gone as are three of our siblings. So, of the six remaining, two are Republicans and three - and that's in question at this time - are Democrats. I am currently still the Independent.

We all graduated from either St. Joseph's Military Academy or Girls Catholic High

School, now the combined names of Thomas More Prep-Marian. Only one sibling remains in Hays, Dolores (Tootsie) Schlyer; Don lives in Overland Park; Dean lives in Corpus Christi, Texas; Gene lives in Tulsa, Okla.; JoAnn Jay-jack lives in Schererville, Ind.; and I now live in Aurora. Everybody is retired.

With the presidential election beginning to pick up a little steam, I have decided I need to get back under a political tent and maybe become a little bit active. Active? Me with a cane, bad eyes, hearing aids, diabetes, neuropathy of both feet, unable to drive? I sound like I'd be more suited as a mannequin for a mortuary.

I still have a little bit of time to secure the necessary forms to make me once again a proud member of a political party. The deliberation is underway. I'll be glad when the decision is made, the paperwork filed and I can say, "Give me an....?"

I am amazed at the names of potential Republican presidential candidates arriving in my e-mail each day. The number is now standing at 20. A few familiar names are no where to be found, but a couple of "who are they?" surfaced. For those of you in the reading audience who haven't taken part in the poll, please do. Simply e-mail me who you would like to see get the nomination. That's it, all that simple. Then e-mail me at milehitom@hotmail.com

I didn't watch Chris Matthews' documentary on Bill Clinton "President of the World." That would mean Clinton is again president of the U.S.A. I betcha if Monica Lewinsky watched it, she dashed out to buy a pair of the fastest running shoes she could find on the market - this time to get away! Hold your fire, just an honest observation.

I will have the straw poll numbers in my next column, as well as more comments from you readers.

Tom Dreiling is a retired journalist, now living in Aurora, Colo. He edited and published newspaper in Kansas and Wyoming during his 44-year career.

## Nature teasing us with good weather

Nature can be so cruel, teasing us like she did last week.

Still, when the end of February rolls around, spring can't be far away.

You had to know that she was kidding when she sent us 70-degree weather at the middle of the month. My guess is even the wheat plants knew it was a trick, and wheat plants are notoriously short on intellect.

I admit, one batch of jonquils out back did start to poke their heads up above the ground. So far, they haven't been nipped even though it got down to 10 degrees by Monday morning.

Other flowers, including the crocuses, wisely stayed hidden. And I don't blame them.

We stayed inside, too, with a north wind blowing. Looking at the forecast, I'm thinking we will be woefully short of our goal of walking 25 miles this week.

Cynthia says her ears are sensitive, and she can't be out in the cold wind. Sounds like an excuse to me, but when it gets below 20 and there's a wind, I don't argue.

The dog is always willing to go for a walk, no matter how cold it is, rain or shine. Only heat would keep her in the house. But then, she's a dog. Wheat plants are smarter.

Cats are a different story. They hate cold. You'd think a creature wearing a fur coat would take to cold, but cats are most happy beside a warm stove - or on the porch on a 90-degree day. On a cold night, they set foot outside, then turn around and go back in. No wonder people say they're so smart.



steve haynes

• along the sappa

Still, winter is about over. According to the climate people, spring weather here starts about March 1, and that usually is the case. Sure, there'll be snow and cold days. But the temperatures start to creep up and snow stays around only a day or two.

You only have to remember that March is to spring as November is to fall. April and October are mates. It won't be really nice until May, and all too soon, it'll be summer.

But spring training is in full swing, and Saturday the first games in the Cactus League begin the season. Barely a month later, it'll be opening day.

Soon enough, we'll be raking, trimming, cleaning, watering and mowing, getting flower beds, gardens and lawns ready to grow. We'll have to clean and tune the mower, find someone to till the garden and fertilize the lawn.

I don't know about you, but right now the idea of yard work sounds pretty good. I know by August, it'll be drudgery, but compared to shoveling snow, I'll take it.

Snow. In March and April, you hardly have to shovel the stuff. You just clear doors, maybe a path to the car, and let it melt. Because warmer days are the one thing that's certain.

Daylight Saving Time starts March 13 this year, the second Sunday of the month. By March 20, when the spring equinox rolls around, and some people say it's the "official" start of spring, it'll already be time to mow the lawn. Days will start to be longer than night, especially noticeable with the earlier start to summer time.

In March, you may begin the month worried about blizzards, but you're sure to end it worried about tornadoes. April and May are prime time for "summer" storms, and the nasty stuff usually trails off after June.

By April, bushes will sprout leaves, the lawn will be in flower and grass will need to be cut. By April, we'll be waiting for the trees to leaf out and the irises to bloom. Won't happen 'til May, but that won't keep us from wanting.

Soon enough, it'll be summer. But let's not rush things. Just enjoy spring. After this week, we'll deserve it.

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